

Back to Nature

Beliefs and customs - Folk Stuff 18

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 West 130 Street

DATE May 8, 1939

SUBJECT Back To Nature

1. Date and time of interview
2. Place of interview
3. Name and address of informant
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 West 130 Street

DATE May 8, 1939

SUBJECT Back To Nature

"This here Geographic magazine is real swell. Been readin' it las' night an' went thru it twice. ——— Looke here — here's real life.

Ever hear 'bout Belgian Congo? You did, huh? That some piece of land ——— Look at this map; big huh? Here's some pictures of African life. See how they dress? That's the life, boy. That's where I wanna go!

To hell with this civilization. I ain't got no taste for this life here. No sir! What the hell am I doin' here? I can't get used to it a bit. Yes, sir; my folks came from thereabouts — been shipped over here — slaves — tied together and shipped here, and you can't tell me we's any better than we were over there. There's real life there — no so called civilization — just live natural; none of these clothes an' none of this discrimination.

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What am I doin' here pumpin' up this elevator — gettin, where? Nowhere! Look here an' tell me if this ain't real life — free an' happy an' no such city civilization. That's where I wanna go. Yes, sir; I'd go right now ——— right away!

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Boy! I'd like to take off these cloes — just wear natural cloes like this here picture. That's healthy, boy; not like this junk we choke in. Real cloes an' real life — trees an' grass an' animals — free as the wind. — “Roamin' around like my ancestors did; free to live an' not worry 'bout jobs an' bosses. That's unnatural. Yessir ——— to be real happy an' dance like in this picture — that's real life — dance an' hunt an' be back in your ancestors' territory. This here city civilization's got me.

An' what're we workin' for? To buy cloes an' feed a family an' run up and down with this elevator year in an' out. If that's civilized, then give me Africa, for that's where I wanna go to and be reallhappy.

Yes, boy, that's real life — free life. I'd leave this minute. I don't feel I belong here — I'm sick of this here job an' the mess I have to live in. There ain't no opportunity. You ain't gonna tell me there is. If there wuz I wouldn't be here. I study at home nights an' during my lunch. So what? How'm I gonna get a decent job? You know just as I that it's tough to get a decent job on account of my skin. It's black ——— that's what keeps me from gettin' decent work. — Think I like it here pushin' up this elevator? Like Hell!

My skin's black. It makes a hell uva lot of difference — here — but there — over in the Congo? That's my place; no color discrimination — no such lousy civilization. And real freedom, yessir! Real freedom! That's natural, that is — green grass an' a beautiful sky. You're just as good as anyone an' free to live happy. You feel you own the trees an' birds an' animals an' all that's around you. That's life, boy ——— honest an' free.

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Yes! I'd like to go right now an' you bet I'd be happy as hell —- that's the place I'd give anything to be at!